

THE DAILY QUIET TIME REFLECTIONS SERIES

JUDGMENT AND GLORY

Reflections on the Book of Isaiah

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Judgment and Glory: Reflections on the Book of Isaiah

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How to Use This Book

Reading, Reflecting, Together

This book was not written to be read in a single sitting. It follows the same daily rhythm as every volume in this series: one reading, one reflection, one day at a time. Each chapter corresponds to a portion of Scripture from the Bible Reading Plan included as an appendix, so that this book can be read alongside your own Bible in the same unhurried pace in which it was first written — as a daily discipline of Quiet Time, not a book to be consumed in a weekend.

Each chapter grew out of years of daily reflections shared by fellow readers working through the same passage on the same day, together with notes drawn from Sunday School classes at First Baptist Church in Dallas. What you are holding, then, is not a technical commentary but a companion for your own reading — written by fellow travelers, not experts, who have simply tried to sit with the text long enough to let it speak.

We encourage you to read the day's passage first, in your own Bible, before turning to the corresponding chapter here. Let Scripture have the first word. Then let this book help you listen more closely to what God has already said.

At the end of each chapter you will find a handful of reflection and discussion questions, suitable for personal journaling or group study. Take your time. Isaiah is not a book to be hurried through — its sixty-six chapters reward slow, attentive, patient reading, and its central message, judgment giving way to glory, is one best absorbed a little at a time.

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Introduction

Isaiah ministered for more than sixty years, through the reigns of four kings of Judah, and left behind the longest and in many ways the most theologically comprehensive of all the prophetic books. His name means "the LORD saves," and that single truth — stated in his name before it is ever argued in his book — turns out to be the whole of what he came to say. Everything else in these sixty-six chapters, whether oracle of judgment or promise of glory, is commentary on that one fact.

He began his ministry in the year King Uzziah died, called by a vision of the LORD seated on His throne, high and exalted, the train of His robe filling the temple. That vision — of a God who is, above every other attribute, holy — shaped everything Isaiah would go on to write. The prophet lived through Judah's slow slide toward the Assyrian threat that had already swallowed the Northern Kingdom, and he lived long enough to see Judah's King Hezekiah both nearly ruin the nation through pride and nearly save it through faith. Assyria's shadow dominates the book's first half. Babylon's shadow, further off but named with startling specificity, dominates its second.

It is this specificity that has made Isaiah controversial among scholars who cannot accept that a prophet writing in the eighth century before Christ could have named, more than a hundred years in advance, the very king — Cyrus of Persia — who would end the exile Isaiah also predicted before it had even begun. We take Isaiah

at his word, and more importantly, we take Jesus and His apostles at theirs: the New Testament quotes Isaiah as the author of the entire book, early chapters and late, without qualification. The oldest complete manuscript of Isaiah ever discovered, among the Dead Sea Scrolls, shows no seam at chapter forty, no hint that ancient readers understood this as anything but a single, unified work. We read it that way too.

That said, the book does divide naturally into two great movements, and this volume follows that division. The first thirty-nine chapters largely concern themselves with the sins of Judah and the surrounding nations and the judgment those sins deserve, set against the historical backdrop of Assyria's rise. The last twenty-seven, addressed as if from within a future exile that had not yet occurred, look past judgment to comfort, past exile to restoration, and past both to the Servant of the LORD who would bear the sins of many and, in bearing them, become Judah's — and the world's — only lasting hope. Judgment first. Then glory. The two halves of Isaiah are, in miniature, the two halves of the whole Bible: thirty-nine chapters of judgment, as there are thirty-nine Old Testament books; twenty-seven chapters of grace, as there are twenty-seven New Testament books. Isaiah did not plan that symmetry. God did.

Isaiah's primary complaint against his own generation was never that they had abandoned religious observance. They fasted. They sacrificed. They kept the feasts. The problem was that none of it was matched by justice or mercy toward the people around them, and so their worship became, in God's own description, lip service — honor from the mouth while the heart stayed far away. Judgment, when it came, would not fall because Judah stopped going through the motions of religion, but because the motions were all that were left.

And yet judgment is never Isaiah's last word. Wherever this book pronounces destruction, it is already preparing, often within the same breath, an announcement of restoration for a purified remnant, a coming King who will reign in righteousness, and a Servant whose suffering will accomplish what no sacrifice of bulls and goats ever could. More than any other Old Testament book except the Psalms, Isaiah is saturated with the coming Messiah — the Branch of David, the Servant of the LORD, the Prince of Peace, the one on whom the LORD would lay the iniquity of us all. Nowhere in the Old Testament is the good news of the gospel preached more clearly, or in more detail, than in Isaiah 53. It has rightly earned the title "the fifth gospel."

We have organized this volume in two parts, following the reading plan included as an appendix: **Part One: Judgment**, covering Isaiah 1 through 35, and **Part Two: Glory**, covering Isaiah 36 through 66. The historical narrative of Hezekiah's crisis with Assyria, chapters 36 through 39, forms the hinge between the two — the last great test of the book's first half and the occasion for the announcement of comfort that opens its second. We have placed those hinge chapters at the head of Part Two, since it is there, in the moment Judah's own strength finally and visibly failed, that the book turns from oracle to promise, from *woe* to *comfort*, *comfort my people*.

Read slowly. Isaiah rewards it.

Part One

Judgment

Isaiah 1–35

Judah in Isaiah's day was, by any external measure, a religious nation. The temple stood. The sacrifices continued. The calendar of feasts and Sabbaths was kept. What Isaiah was sent to expose was that all of it had become theater — worship offered by lips that had never engaged the heart, ritual performed by a people who continued, in the very same week, to oppress the poor, corrupt the courts, and bow down to idols on the side. Isaiah's charge against Judah in these first thirty-nine chapters is not that she had become irreligious, but that her religion had become a substitute for obedience rather than an expression of it.

These chapters do not proceed in strict chronological order. Isaiah arranged his material by theme more than by date, gathering oracles from across decades of ministry into a single, sweeping indictment. At the center sits his own commissioning in chapter 6 — the vision of the LORD's holiness that would govern everything else he wrote — and around it, oracles addressed first to Judah and Jerusalem directly (chapters 1–12), then to the surrounding pagan nations whose fall would demonstrate that the LORD, not their idols, ruled history (chapters 13–23), then a sweeping, almost apocalyptic vision of God's judgment and future kingdom over the whole earth (chapters 24–27), and finally a return to Judah's specific choice, in the days of King Hezekiah, between trusting Assyria or trusting the LORD (chapters 28–35).

Threaded through all of it is a single question, posed differently in each section but never really changing: when the nations rage and the threats multiply, where will Judah — where will we — put our trust? In alliances and armies, or in the God who named the outcome before the armies had even marched?

CHAPTER ONE

Though Your Sins Are Like Scarlet

Isaiah 1–4

Isaiah opens his book the way a covenant lawsuit opens in the ancient Near East — not with a sermon but with a summons. "Listen, O heavens! Pay attention, earth!" the prophet cries, and the charge that follows is almost unbearably intimate: "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me." Even an ox knows its owner, Isaiah says. Even a donkey recognizes its master's care. But Israel does not know. Israel does not consider. The indictment is not that God's people have failed to keep a rule; it is that they have failed to recognize their own Father, though He raised them from nothing.

It would be easy, reading this, to build a whole theology of God's fatherhood around His patience — and Isaiah does not deny that patience is real. But the same chapter that opens with God's grief over His rebellious children closes with a sober warning that transgressors and sinners will be crushed together, and those who forsake the LORD will come to an end. We are tempted, in every generation, to keep the tender half of what Scripture says about God's fatherhood and quietly set aside the rest — the discipline, the judgment, the real possibility of rejection for a people who reject Him first. But God is not, first, a parent modeled on our own sentimental hopes for parenthood. He is God, and He will be true to His own holiness whether or not that holiness comforts us. His mercy toward the repentant is real. So is His severity toward the unrepentant. Both come from the same unchanging character.

And yet — this is the turn Isaiah makes again and again throughout his book, and never more plainly than here — judgment

is not God's final word even in chapter one. "Though your sins are like scarlet, I will make them as white as snow," the LORD says. "Though they are red like crimson, I will make them as white as wool." This is not an offer available to the unrepentant while they remain unrepentant; it is an invitation to "come now, let us settle this." The language reaches further than the Mosaic covenant's conditional blessings and curses — this is a promise of sins genuinely wiped away, and it anticipates by centuries the new covenant Jeremiah would later describe, where God's law is written not on tablets of stone but on the heart itself.

Chapter two supplies the picture toward which this whole book is straining: a day when the mountain of the LORD's house will be raised above every other hill, when the nations will stream to it not to conquer but to learn, when God Himself will settle every dispute between them, and swords will be reforged into plows. Nearly nine hundred years later, John would see something remarkably similar and describe a city with no temple at all, because the LORD God and the Lamb had become its temple, and the nations walked in its light (Revelation 21:22–27). Isaiah's vision of the New Jerusalem and John's are the same vision, seen from either end of the story.

Between those two pictures — the rebellious child in chapter one and the glorified city in chapter two — sits the entire drama of the book. How does a people this unfaithful arrive at a future that glorious? Only by the LORD's own initiative to make scarlet sins white as snow. Not by better behavior. Not by more sincere ritual. By grace, received in repentance, and secured by a promise Isaiah is only beginning to unfold.

For Reflection

1. Where in your own life have you kept the comforting parts of God's character in view while quietly setting aside His holiness and justice?
2. What would it look like, practically, to "come now, and let us settle this" with God today rather than postponing repentance?
3. How does Isaiah's picture of the nations streaming to Zion in peace shape the way you think about God's ultimate plan for history?

CHAPTER TWO

Here Am I, Send Me

Isaiah 5–8

Two men hear directly from the LORD in these four chapters, and their two responses could not stand in sharper contrast.

The first is Isaiah himself. In a vision that would define the whole of his prophetic ministry, he sees the LORD seated on a throne, high and exalted, the seraphim calling to one another, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of Heaven's Armies." Isaiah's response to that vision is not confidence but collapse — "Woe is me, for I am ruined!" — until a seraph touches his mouth with a coal from the altar and declares his guilt taken away. Only then does he hear the question that has echoed through the church ever since: "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And Isaiah, cleansed and undone in the same instant, answers before the question is even finished: "Here am I. Send me!"

The second man is King Ahaz. Facing an invasion from an alliance of Aram and the Northern Kingdom of Israel, Ahaz receives an extraordinary personal assurance from the LORD, delivered through Isaiah directly: "Be careful, keep calm and don't be afraid... it will not take place." God even offers Ahaz a confirming sign, his choice, "whether in the deepest depths or the highest heights." And Ahaz refuses. "I will not ask; I will not put the LORD to the test," he says — language that sounds pious on the surface but conceals a king who has already decided to trust Assyria instead of God and does not want a sign complicating that decision.

Two men, the same LORD speaking directly to both. One says, *send me*. The other says, in effect, *don't send anything — I've already made my plans*. Ahaz's refusal is not humility. It is unbelief wearing

humility's clothing, and Isaiah is careful to let us see the difference. Real trust in God does not need to manufacture reasons to avoid Him.

The consequences of Ahaz's choice unfold across the rest of the book. He strips the temple treasury to buy an alliance with Assyria, and within a generation the very power he hired to save him becomes the power that devours the Northern Kingdom and presses hard on Judah as well. Isaiah's word to him at the time could not have been plainer: "It is the LORD of Hosts whom you should regard as holy. And He shall be your fear, and He shall be your dread." The people were listening to their fears instead. Isaiah describes the LORD Himself becoming, to a people unwilling to trust Him, "a stone to strike and a rock to stumble over" — not because He changed, but because a people determined to trust something else will inevitably stumble over the very God who could have been their sanctuary.

Earlier in this section, in the well-known Song of the Vineyard, Isaiah pictures Judah as a carefully tended vineyard that nonetheless produced only wild grapes, and pronounces a series of woes on the specific sins that soured the fruit — woe to those who add house to house, woe to those who call evil good and good evil, and, tellingly, woe to those who rise early to chase strong drink and stay up late letting wine inflame them, so consumed with entertainment and indulgence that they "do not pay attention to the deeds of the LORD." You could substitute almost anything for "strong drink" in that woe — work, ambition, entertainment, the constant hum of distraction — and the indictment would still land. The issue was never the wine itself. It was what the wine, and everything like it, had crowded out.

For Reflection

1. What is the difference between Ahaz's "I will not put the LORD to the test" and genuine humility before God? How can you tell the difference in your own heart?
2. Isaiah's "Here am I, send me" came only after he had seen his own guilt exposed and forgiven. Why might that order — cleansing before commissioning — matter?
3. What has quietly become your "strong drink" — the thing that dominates your time and attention to the neglect of considering what God is doing?

CHAPTER THREE

A Light Has Dawned

Isaiah 9–12

The historical crisis of chapters seven and eight — Ahaz's choice to trust Assyria rather than the LORD — continues to shape these four chapters, but Isaiah's vision keeps reaching past the immediate crisis toward something far larger.

"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light," Isaiah announces, naming the very region — Galilee, "beyond the Jordan," land of Zebulun and Naphtali — where the light would eventually shine. Matthew tells us plainly that this prophecy found its fulfillment when Jesus, having heard that John the Baptist had been arrested, left Nazareth and settled in Capernaum, in that same region, and began to preach (Matthew 4:12–17). The child Isaiah goes on to describe — "to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders... Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" — is that same light in human form, and His kingdom, Isaiah says, will never end.

Not everyone who saw that light welcomed it, of course. John's Gospel makes the same observation Isaiah anticipates: light came into the world, but people loved the darkness instead, because their deeds were evil (John 3:19–21). The rejoicing Isaiah describes belongs to the faithful remnant, not to everyone indiscriminately — a theme this book will return to again and again. Light exposes. Not everyone wants to be seen.

Chapter ten turns from promise to the hard mechanics of history, and here Isaiah sets before us one of Scripture's clearest pictures of divine sovereignty operating through, rather than despite,

human responsibility. The LORD calls Assyria "the rod of My anger," an instrument He is sending against a godless nation to execute judgment. And yet in the very same breath, Assyria stands condemned for the arrogance with which it carries out that commission — for boasting that its own strength, not the LORD's, accomplished the conquest. Assyria is fully God's tool and fully guilty for how it wields itself as one. Scripture never resolves that tension by softening either half. It simply holds both, the way it holds Ahaz's genuine choice to distrust God alongside God's sovereign use of that choice within a larger plan neither Ahaz nor Assyria could see.

Out of that same judgment, though, Isaiah promises a remnant — "a remnant of Israel... will never again depend on him who defeated them, but will depend on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth." And chapter eleven pushes the promise further still, describing a shoot that will grow from the stump of Jesse — David's father — on whom the Spirit of the LORD will rest, who will judge with perfect righteousness, and under whose reign even the natural order will be reconciled, the wolf lying down with the lamb. Chapter twelve closes this section with a song of praise anticipating exactly that day: "Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid."

Trusting the LORD is the thread that runs through every page of this section, and it is worth asking, as Isaiah's own commentary elsewhere invites us to ask, where our confidence actually rests day to day. Kings and nations, Scripture insists, are as nothing before the LORD — He raises them up and brings them down by His purpose. Our own decisions are rarely as consequential as Ahaz's, but the underlying question is identical: is the LORD an uncertain backup to our other plans and preparations, or is He, in fact, the ground beneath them?

For Reflection

1. How do you hold together God's sovereignty over Assyria's invasion with Assyria's genuine guilt for how it carried it out? Why does Scripture refuse to resolve that tension?
2. Isaiah 9 was fulfilled with striking precision in Matthew 4. What does that fulfillment tell you about the reliability of the rest of Isaiah's prophecies, including those not yet fulfilled?
3. Where do you notice your trust quietly shifting from the LORD to something more visible and immediate — an ally, a plan, a resource?

CHAPTER FOUR

How You Have Fallen

Isaiah 13–17

Having addressed Judah directly, Isaiah turns for eleven chapters to the nations surrounding her — Babylon, Assyria, Philistia, Moab, Damascus, and others — pronouncing judgment on each in turn. The point is not merely that these particular nations will fall; it is that their fall demonstrates the LORD's rule over history in a way no idol could ever claim for itself. The nations trusted their own strength and their own gods. Isaiah shows both failing.

Nowhere is this more vivid than in the taunt song against the king of Babylon in chapter fourteen, where Isaiah puts words of mockery in the mouths of the dead, greeting the once-mighty ruler's arrival in the grave: "How you have fallen from heaven, morning star, son of the dawn!" The Hebrew word behind that phrase, later rendered "Lucifer" in the King James Version by way of the Latin Vulgate, simply means "shining one" or "morning star" — a poetic image ancient writers regularly used for fallen rulers, comparing their sudden collapse to a bright star plunging from the sky. The context is unmistakably a human king: he is buried, his body is food for worms, and those who see him ask, "Is this the man who made the earth tremble?" Whatever later tradition made of this passage as a picture of Satan's original fall, the text itself is describing the death of an arrogant Babylonian monarch who said in his heart, "I will make myself like the Most High" — the same self-exalting boast, worth noting, that the serpent offered Eve in the garden, and that would echo again at Babel. Pride reaching to unseat God is the oldest sin in the book, and it always ends the same way.

Not every oracle in this section is pure judgment, however. In the midst of the oracle against Moab — a nation with a real family connection to Israel, descended from Lot, Abraham's nephew — Isaiah suddenly shifts register: "A throne will even be established in lovingkindness, and a judge will sit on it in faithfulness in the tent of David." The Hebrew word behind "lovingkindness" here is *hesed*, the word that always points back to God's covenant faithfulness. This is the same Davidic promise Isaiah had already described in chapter nine — a king who will reign in justice and righteousness, "the zeal of the LORD Almighty" accomplishing it — surfacing here almost as an aside, in the middle of judgment on a foreign nation, as if to remind the reader that even while the nations fall, the promise to David's line stands secure.

That is, in miniature, the pattern of this whole section, and really of the whole book: relentless judgment on human pride, interrupted again and again by glimpses of a throne that will not fall, because it does not rest on human strength in the first place. Whatever your confidence is built on — your own competence, your own reputation, your own carefully constructed plans — Isaiah's oracles against the nations are a standing warning that anything built on those foundations will eventually be shown for what it is. Only what rests on the LORD's own faithfulness endures.

For Reflection

1. What does the "Lucifer" passage actually say about the king of Babylon, and why does it matter to read it in its own historical context before drawing larger theological conclusions from it?
2. The same prideful boast — "I will make myself like the Most High" — appears at Eden, at Babel, and in Babylon's king. Where do you see that same impulse working in yourself?

3. The Davidic promise appears almost unexpectedly in the middle of judgment on Moab. What does that placement suggest about how grace tends to show up in Scripture — and in life?

CHAPTER FIVE

The Valley of Vision

Isaiah 18–22

Egypt and Ethiopia press for an alliance against Assyria; Judah is tempted to buy their help. Isaiah's counsel is to trust the Creator rather than the creature — God's activity may be as quiet and inescapable as the sun and the dew, easy to overlook precisely because it comes without fanfare, but it is no less certain for that. The nations, however imposing their envoys, are themselves instruments in the hand of the LORD. The day is coming, Isaiah says, when it is Ethiopia that will bring gifts to Jerusalem, not the other way around. Trusting in visible alliances, however sensible they appear, is always a hedge against trusting the God who has already demonstrated His power in creation and in history alike.

The most searching passage in this section, though, concerns Jerusalem herself, described here as "the Valley of Vision" — Jerusalem, ringed by higher mountains so that it sits, geographically, in a kind of valley, and named for its role as the place from which God's prophets declared what they had seen. Under Assyrian siege, the city's leaders respond with feverish practical activity: inspecting the walls, storing water, tearing down houses for stone to reinforce the defenses. All of this might have been wise. What damns it is what is missing: "you never ask for help from the One who did all this. You never considered the One who planned this long ago." Even more troubling than the frantic defensive engineering is what follows it — not repentance, but revelry. "Let's feast and drink, for tomorrow we die." Facing what feels like certain judgment, the city chooses fatalism dressed up as celebration rather than the weeping and mourning God had actually called for.

This is worth sitting with, because fatalism rarely announces itself as fatalism. It usually shows up as either apathy or its opposite, a kind of frantic indulgence — the conviction that since the outcome is fixed, we might as well feast while we can. Judah did both: frantic practical activity to manage the crisis, and reckless indulgence to numb its dread, neither of which involved actually turning back to God. The passage's severest note follows directly: "Till the day you die, you will never be forgiven for this sin" — not because repentance was ever too late for God to receive, but because a people who will not even ask for it cannot receive what they will not seek.

If you have ever found yourself weary of trying to live rightly, tempted to assume that what will be will be, or numbing a real fear with distraction rather than bringing it honestly to God, this passage is speaking directly to you. The title this passage lent to a beloved collection of old Puritan prayers points toward something worth recovering: that the proper response to crisis is neither frantic self-management nor resigned indulgence, but the kind of honest, searching prayer that actually reckons with God. His mercies, unlike ours, are new every morning. The invitation to repent again — even for what feels like the thousandth time — never actually expires while there is still breath to receive it.

For Reflection

1. Where in your own life do you notice the pattern of frantic practical activity substituting for actually turning to God in prayer?
2. What does "fatalism dressed up as celebration" look like in a modern life, even one that never feels the drama of a besieged city?

3. What would it look like this week to bring a specific fear honestly to God rather than either managing it alone or numbing it with distraction?

CHAPTER SIX

Perfect Peace

Isaiah 23–27

After eleven chapters of judgment against individual nations, Isaiah widens the lens still further in chapters 24 through 27 to something closer to a vision of the end of all things — a coming day when the LORD will judge the whole earth, when death itself will be swallowed up forever, and when His people will finally sing a new song of praise in a fortified city where salvation itself forms the walls and ramparts.

In the middle of that sweeping vision sits one of the most quoted verses in the entire book: "You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You." The King James rendering has a rhythm worth noticing — eight strong beats declaring what God will do, followed by two shorter, subordinate clauses describing the person who receives it: one whose mind is fixed on God, and one who trusts Him. The peace is not something we manufacture through discipline or self-persuasion. It is something God bestows, and the only condition attached to it is where our attention and our trust actually rest.

This is not peace as the absence of difficulty. It is common, in a season of real anxiety, to find that peace does not arrive through resolving the underlying circumstances first, but through the mind returning, again and again, to the truths of salvation in Christ, God's abundant providence, and the sufficiency of His grace — often while the circumstances remain exactly as difficult as they were. Peace this deep is God's gift to a mind fixed on Him, not the reward for having first fixed everything else.

Isaiah's own confession a few verses later makes the same point from a different angle: "My soul yearns for You in the night; in the morning my spirit longs for You." The prophet's deepest hunger is not for resolution of Judah's political crisis, but for God Himself. Asaph, the psalmist, would say something nearly identical: "Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth... the nearness of God is my good" (Psalm 73:25–26, 28). Both writers arrive, by different roads, at the same discovery — that the deepest human ache is not actually for safety or resolution, but for God's own nearness, and that every lesser good, properly understood, was designed to point us back to Him.

If your mind tends to drift, under pressure, toward every possible variable except the one thing that actually holds — this section is an invitation to notice that drift and to redirect it. Perfect peace is available. It simply is not available anywhere except in a mind that has come to rest, again and again, deliberately, on God.

For Reflection

1. What does it mean, practically, to keep your "mind stayed" on God in the middle of a genuinely difficult circumstance, rather than only after it resolves?
2. Isaiah and Asaph both describe longing for God Himself, not merely for God's help. How would you describe the difference in your own experience of prayer?
3. What single truth about God do you most need to fix your mind on this week?

CHAPTER SEVEN

Lips Near, Hearts Far

Isaiah 28–30

Isaiah turns back to Judah's own leadership in these chapters, and the picture is not flattering. The religious leaders — priests and prophets alike — are drunk, reeling with wine, so far gone that they mock Isaiah's own careful, patient teaching as baby talk: "order on order, order on order, line on line, line on line, a little here, a little there." They complain, in effect, that God is treating them like children just weaned from milk. Isaiah's answer is severe: since they will not listen to God's word delivered plainly, they will hear it instead through the stammering lips and foreign tongue of an invading army — the very thing they are mocking will become, in a much less comfortable form, exactly what happens to them.

Centuries later, Paul would draw on this same passage in his letter to the Corinthians, in his argument about the gift of tongues (1 Corinthians 14:20–22). Understood against its Isaiah background, Paul's point becomes clearer: tongues functioned in the earliest church as a sign of judgment directed at an unbelieving audience, not as an ordinary gift for believers to cultivate among themselves. The connection is easy to miss without the Isaiah passage behind it, and it is a good reminder that the New Testament writers assumed their readers knew the Old Testament well enough to catch these echoes.

At the center of this section sits one of Isaiah's most piercing diagnoses of false religion: "These people come near to Me with their mouth and honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me. Their worship of Me is based on merely human rules they have been taught." Jesus quotes this precise verse against the

Pharisees in Matthew 15, and the connection is instructive. The problem Isaiah names is not ritual observance itself — God had, after all, commanded a great deal of ritual observance in the law He gave Moses. The problem is hypocrisy: words of praise from lips whose corresponding hearts, and corresponding actions, tell a different story. True obedience, as Jesus makes plain in His own parable of the two sons, is not measured by how sincerely one *says* yes to God, but by whether one actually goes and does what was asked (Matthew 21:28–32).

And yet — this is Isaiah's pattern again, the one you will find in nearly every chapter of this book — judgment is never the final note. "The LORD longs to be gracious to you; therefore He will rise up to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for Him." Even in the middle of exposing empty religion, Isaiah cannot help but point past it to a God who is eager, not reluctant, to show mercy to those who will actually wait on Him rather than merely perform for Him.

For Reflection

1. What is the actual difference, according to Isaiah and Jesus, between meaningful obedience and empty ritual? Is the answer about sincerity of feeling, or about something else?
2. Where might your own worship or spiritual practice have drifted toward lips honoring God while your heart, or your actions, tell a different story?
3. What does it look like, practically, to "wait for" the LORD rather than to perform for Him?

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Highway of Holiness

Isaiah 31–35

This section closes the first great movement of the book with a choice restated one final time — trust in Egypt's chariots and horses, or trust in the LORD — and then, almost without transition, breaks into one of the most beautiful visions in the entire book. The desert will rejoice and blossom, Isaiah says. The eyes of the blind will be opened, the ears of the deaf unstopped, the lame will leap like a deer. And through that transformed and blossoming land will run a highway, "the Highway of Holiness," on which no fool and no dangerous thing will travel — only the redeemed, ransomed by the LORD, entering Jerusalem at last with everlasting joy on their heads, sorrow and sighing fled away.

It is worth pausing on that word *ransomed*. If we are honest about ourselves, none of us would qualify for that highway on our own merits — the text is explicit that it is reserved for the redeemed, and none of us begin as anything but the opposite. But Isaiah does not leave the mechanism of that redemption a mystery. Nowhere in this book is it explained more clearly than in the chapter that follows in the book's second half, where the LORD's Servant is described bearing the weaknesses, the sorrows, the rebellion, and the sin of the very people who will one day walk that highway. Chapter thirty-five's ransomed traveler and chapter fifty-three's suffering Servant are the same story, told from either end — the destination described here, the cost described there.

That connection is worth carrying forward as you read the rest of this book, because it reframes what "redemption" actually cost, and therefore what it actually means for those who have received it.

If we are ransomed — not by any effort or worthiness of our own, but purely by the price another paid on our behalf — then a great deal of what typically consumes our anxiety simply loses its power to do so. What is poverty, sickness, or a difficult relationship, weighed against an eternity already secured? This is not a call to indifference toward real suffering; it is a call to keep suffering in its proper proportion, next to a redemption this costly and this certain. The peace that Christ has accomplished for those He has ransomed is not a fragile, circumstantial peace, dependent on things going well. It is the peace that comes from knowing the highest cost has already been paid, and paid in full.

Faithfulness to that conviction will not always be popular. It will sometimes look, to a watching world, like indifference to things the world considers supremely important, or like a stubborn refusal to be moved by what everyone else finds alarming. Better that than the alternative — living as though the ransom had never actually been paid, and carrying, day after day, a weight that has already, in truth, been lifted.

For Reflection

1. What connection do you see between the "ransomed" travelers of Isaiah 35 and the Servant who bears their sin in Isaiah 53? Why might it matter to read these two passages together?
2. If your redemption is genuinely secure, what specific anxiety in your life right now might you be carrying unnecessarily?
3. What would it look like to hold real suffering and real peace together, rather than assuming one must cancel out the other?

Part Two

Glory

Isaiah 36–66

Everything changes at chapter forty — but the hinge that turns it comes first, in the historical narrative of chapters 36 through 39. There, Isaiah steps briefly out of oracle and into history, recording in prose the crisis of King Hezekiah's reign: the Assyrian army under Sennacherib at Jerusalem's gates, Hezekiah's field commander mocking the very idea that the LORD could deliver the city, and then, when Hezekiah takes the threatening letter into the temple and lays it before the LORD in prayer, the astonishing deliverance that follows in a single night. It is the one moment in the book's first half where trust in the LORD alone, rather than in any alliance, is actually put to the test in real time — and it holds. Hezekiah's later folly, welcoming Babylonian envoys and showing off Judah's treasures, closes this section with a warning: the very nation just defeated by faith would return one day, by folly, as conqueror.

That warning is the doorway into everything that follows. The rest of this book addresses a people who have not yet gone into exile but who will — and it does not merely warn them of that coming judgment; it comforts a people who, in the book's own narrative logic, are already living through it. "Comfort, comfort My people," the LORD announces in chapter forty, and from there Isaiah's tone changes almost entirely. Judgment has not vanished from these pages, but it now serves a different purpose: not as a threat still to be avoided, but as a wound already given, to which God now speaks healing.

The theological center of this second movement is the figure of the Servant of the LORD, who appears and reappears across four major songs (42:1–9; 49:1–13; 50:4–11; and climactically 52:13–53:12), sometimes identified with the nation of Israel, sometimes with a faithful remnant within Israel, and finally, unmistakably, with a single individual whose suffering accomplishes what neither Israel nor any sacrifice ever could. Alongside the Servant runs the figure of Cyrus, a pagan king named by God more than a century before his birth, whose historical decree would end the Babylonian exile and prove, with a specificity no idol could ever match, that the LORD alone declares the end from the beginning.

This half of the book closes, in its final seven chapters, with a vision of new heavens and a new earth — the same destination Isaiah's judgment oracles were always secretly aiming toward, now finally, fully in view.

CHAPTER NINE

Comfort, Comfort My People

Isaiah 36–41

Sennacherib's messenger, Rabshakeh, stands outside Jerusalem's walls and delivers one of the most theologically loaded taunts in all of Scripture: "If you say to me, 'We trust in the LORD our God,' is it not He whose high places and altars Hezekiah has taken away?" It is a distortion dressed as fact — Hezekiah had removed the illegitimate high places precisely because the LORD had commanded worship at Jerusalem alone, not because he had abandoned the LORD. Rabshakeh then goes further, claiming Assyria marches against Jerusalem with the LORD's own approval, and further still, declaring flatly that no god of any nation has ever delivered its people from Assyria's hand, and Israel's God will be no different. It is Satan's oldest strategy — half-truth wrapped around outright deception — deployed now through the mouth of a foreign general.

And Hezekiah, to his lasting credit, does not answer Rabshakeh with an argument. He takes the letter into the temple, spreads it before the LORD, and prays. That night, Scripture records, the angel of the LORD strikes down the Assyrian army, and Sennacherib returns home to be assassinated by his own sons. The nation that had just mocked the LORD's power to deliver discovers, in a single night, exactly how mistaken it was.

It is out of this crisis — a king who, when every human calculation had failed, humbled himself and trusted the LORD alone — that the book's tone turns. "Comfort, comfort My people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for."

The prophet who spent thirty-nine chapters pronouncing judgment now spends the rest of his book pronouncing comfort, and the pivot could not be more deliberate.

That comfort arrives, notably, alongside a sustained mockery of idols — craftsmen carefully shaping a block of wood into a god, then fastening it to a base so that it will not topple over. Isaiah's point is not merely that idols are foolish, though they are; it is that even in the elaborate care idol makers lavish on their creations, we glimpse a distorted echo of how much more carefully the true God, who actually is Creator rather than created, upholds His own people: "though you are a lowly worm, O Jacob, don't be afraid... I will help you." We are, none of us, in a position to negotiate terms with our Maker as though we were His equal — we did not make ourselves, any more than an idol chooses its own shape. But unlike an idol, we are upheld by a God who is genuinely able, and genuinely willing, to hold us fast.

For Reflection

1. Rabshakeh's taunt mixed truth (Hezekiah did remove the high places) with a lie (that this meant abandoning the LORD). What half-truths tend to unsettle your own trust in God?
2. Hezekiah responded to an unanswerable threat by taking it directly to God in prayer rather than arguing back. What would it look like to do the same with your own unanswerable threats?
3. How does the image of an idol maker carefully upholding his own creation change the way you think about God's care for you?

CHAPTER TEN

My Chosen, in Whom My Soul Delights

Isaiah 42–44

The first of Isaiah's Servant Songs opens this section: "Here is My Servant, whom I uphold, My chosen one in whom I delight." Unlike the conquering kings and mocking generals of the previous chapters, this Servant will not shout in the streets or break a bruised reed — He will bring forth justice quietly, faithfully, until it is established in the earth. The New Testament identifies this figure unmistakably with Jesus (Matthew 12:15–21), but even here, on its own terms, the description is already startling: a Servant who conquers not by force but by gentleness, and whose success is nonetheless guaranteed by the same LORD who "will not give My glory to another."

Around that Servant Song, Isaiah continues an argument he will press relentlessly for the rest of the book: the LORD alone can foretell the future, and He has done exactly that, repeatedly, as proof that He alone is God. "I am the LORD; that is My name! I will not give My glory to anyone else, nor share My praise with carved idols. Everything I prophesied has come true, and now I will prophesy again." This is not incidental to the book's argument — it is close to its center. Idols cannot predict tomorrow because idols are not actually there to know it. The LORD names events a century or more before they happen — including, astonishingly, the specific pagan king, Cyrus, who will one day decree Judah's return from an exile that had not even begun yet — because only the God who authors history can announce its unfolding in advance.

This same section contains one of Isaiah's most tender declarations of Israel's chosenness: "Do not be afraid, for I have

ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are Mine... you are precious to Me. You are honored, and I love you." It is not a small thing that God says this to a specific people rather than to humanity in the abstract — election, whatever discomfort the idea causes us, is simply the biblical way of describing how love that is genuinely personal must, by definition, be particular rather than generic. A love spread equally and undifferentiated across everyone and everything is not, in the end, a very deep love at all. The specificity of God's love for His own is precisely what makes it the kind of love worth having.

The section closes with Isaiah's familiar, almost comic exposure of idolatry — a craftsman burning half a log for warmth and cooking, then carving the other half into a god he bows down to and begs for deliverance, apparently blind to the absurdity of praying to firewood. The LORD, by contrast, is the one "who says of Cyrus, 'he is My shepherd, and he will accomplish all that I please.'" No idol has ever named a shepherd king a century in advance. Only the LORD.

For Reflection

1. What is the significance of a coming King who "will not break a bruised reed"? How does that shape your expectations of how God works in your own weakness?
2. Isaiah treats fulfilled prophecy as evidence for God's uniqueness. How does this shape your confidence in the parts of Scripture not yet fulfilled?
3. Does the idea that God's love is specific rather than generic comfort or unsettle you? Why?

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Look to Me and Be Saved

Isaiah 45–48

"Turn to Me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other." Few verses in the Old Testament state the gospel more plainly, and few have a more remarkable track record of actually changing lives — it was this very text, read aloud one ordinary morning in a London chapel, that brought a nineteen-year-old named Charles Spurgeon to faith, and he would recount that morning, decades later, as the hour he first knew the Lord. The invitation Isaiah records here is not limited to Israel; it is extended, deliberately, to "all the ends of the earth," and it is paired with an equally deliberate exclusivity — salvation is found nowhere else. Both halves of that sentence matter. The offer is wide open. The object of that offer is singular.

This same section contains one of Scripture's boldest statements of divine sovereignty in salvation, framed around the image of a potter and his clay: "Woe to the one who quarrels with his Maker... Will the clay say to the potter, 'What are you doing?'" It is not our place to interrogate the Potter's choices, whether in the shaping of a nation like Israel — chosen, called by name, "though you have not known Me" — or in the shaping of a single life. Paul would later use this same image to make an identical argument about God's sovereign choice in salvation (Romans 9:18–21), and the conclusion Isaiah and Paul both draw is the same: the appropriate response to a Maker this sovereign is not negotiation but worship.

The centerpiece of this section, though, is Cyrus — named directly, "thus says the LORD to Cyrus, His anointed," more than a century before Cyrus was born, decades before the Persian empire

that would make him famous even existed. Isaiah describes not only that Cyrus will come, but what he will specifically do: release the exiles, rebuild Jerusalem, relay the temple's foundation — details later confirmed almost verbatim by the Cyrus Cylinder, an ancient clay artifact recovered from Babylon in the nineteenth century, which records Cyrus's own policy of returning displaced peoples to their homelands. This is not a vague, generic prophecy that could apply to any number of future rulers. It is specific, named, and dated with a precision that leaves only two explanations: either God truly does declare the end from the beginning, or this passage was written after the fact by someone who already knew how the story turned out. We believe, on the authority of the earliest manuscripts, of Jesus, and of the apostles, that Isaiah wrote what he wrote when Scripture says he wrote it — which means what we are reading here is not history reported. It is history announced, a century and a half in advance, by the only God capable of making that kind of promise and keeping it.

For Reflection

1. "Turn to Me and be saved" is both universal in its invitation and exclusive in its object. How do you hold both truths together without softening either one?
2. What is your own instinctive reaction to the potter-and-clay image — comfort, resistance, or something in between? Why?
3. What does the specificity of the Cyrus prophecy — named, dated, later verified by an actual historical artifact — do to your confidence in Scripture's reliability more broadly?

CHAPTER TWELVE

By His Stripes We Are Healed

Isaiah 49–53

Two more Servant Songs open this section before the book arrives at its unquestioned theological summit in chapter fifty-three. In the second song, the Servant laments that He has "labored in vain" and "spent My strength for nothing," and yet is answered by the LORD with a commission even larger than the one He thought He had failed: not merely to restore Israel, but to become "a light for the nations, that My salvation may reach to the ends of the earth." The third song describes a Servant who is taught, morning by morning, to sustain the weary with a word — and who, in return for that faithfulness, is struck, spat upon, and shamed, and yet sets His face like flint, confident that the One who vindicates Him is near.

All of this prepares the way for the fourth and final Servant Song, Isaiah 52:13 through 53:12 — arguably the single most important chapter in the entire Old Testament for understanding what Christ actually accomplished on the cross. "Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried... He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed." Nowhere else in Scripture, before the crucifixion actually occurred, is substitutionary atonement described with this much clarity: the innocent Servant bearing the guilt of the guilty, satisfying divine justice on their behalf, so that "the LORD was pleased to crush Him" precisely because His suffering would justify many.

This is the passage Isaiah has been building toward since the "ransomed" travelers of chapter thirty-five, since the Servant first introduced in chapter forty-two, since the mocking of idols that could offer no such rescue. It is fulfilled explicitly in Christ, and Paul's own theology of the cross in Romans reads almost like a commentary on it: "there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus," because "God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering... in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us" (Romans 8:1–4). What Isaiah describes in poetry, Paul explains in argument, and both are describing the same accomplished fact: Christ did not merely take our sin upon Himself; He gives us, in exchange, His own righteousness. "God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

This chapter also contains one of Isaiah's most searching rhetorical questions: "Who has believed our message?" The implied answer, confirmed centuries later by Paul in Romans, is sobering — no one, left to themselves, believes this good news naturally. Faith itself, wherever it appears, is evidence of God's own gracious work, not a testimony to any wisdom or virtue in the one believing. If you have ever wondered why the gospel, so plainly stated here more than seven centuries before the cross, is nonetheless rejected by so many who hear it clearly stated today, Isaiah already answered the question. It was never going to be believed on the strength of its own clarity. It has always required the same grace it announces.

For Reflection

1. Read Isaiah 53 slowly, verse by verse, alongside the Gospel accounts of the crucifixion. Where do the parallels strike you most forcefully?

2. What is the difference between Christ bearing our sin and Christ giving us His righteousness? Why does the gospel require both?
3. If faith itself is a gift rather than an achievement, how should that change the way you think about your own belief — and about sharing it with others who do not yet believe?

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

My Word Will Not Return Empty

Isaiah 54–58

Isaiah turns from the Servant's accomplished redemption to its practical implications for how God's people are meant to live, and the section opens with a promise about God's word itself: "as the rain and the snow come down from heaven... so will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire." Every promise this book has made — judgment on the proud, comfort for the afflicted, a Servant who bears the sin of many — rests on this same guarantee. God's word does not merely describe what might happen. It accomplishes what it declares, the way rain does not merely fall but actually waters the ground and makes it bear fruit.

That confidence in God's word becomes, later in this section, a rebuke of religion that has substituted ritual for obedience. "Yet they act so pious! They come to the temple every day... 'We have fasted before you!' they say. 'Why aren't you impressed?'" God's answer is direct: fasting that coexists with oppressing your workers and quarreling with your neighbors accomplishes nothing with Him. The fasting God actually wants looks entirely different — freeing the wrongly imprisoned, sharing your food with the hungry, giving shelter to the homeless, removing the yoke of oppression. This is not a rejection of spiritual discipline as such; fasting, prayer, and worship are never condemned here in principle. What is condemned is the assumption that any of them substitutes for justice and mercy rather than flowing out of them.

There is also, in this section, an unusually direct word to those who suffer for their faithfulness: "the righteous perish, and no one

takes it to heart... the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil. Those who walk uprightly enter into peace." For believers watching fellow believers suffer real persecution — and this has never stopped being a live reality somewhere in the world in every generation since Isaiah wrote — this is a genuinely difficult promise to sit with. It does not explain away the suffering. It reframes death itself, for the faithful, not as tragedy but as entrance into rest. God's ways, as this same section reminds us, are simply not our ways, and His thoughts are as far above ours as the heavens are above the earth (55:8–9). We are not always given to understand why faithfulness sometimes ends in suffering rather than deliverance. We are given the promise that it never ends there.

For Reflection

1. What does it mean, practically, to trust that God's word "will not return empty" when you are waiting on a promise that has not yet visibly come to pass?
2. Where might your own spiritual disciplines — prayer, church attendance, giving — have become substitutes for justice and mercy rather than expressions that flow from them?
3. How does Isaiah's promise that the righteous who "perish" are actually "spared from evil" shape the way you think about suffering and death among the faithful?

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

His Own Arm Brought Salvation

Isaiah 59–63

Isaiah's diagnosis of sin in this section is as sweeping as anything in Scripture, and he is careful to include himself in it: "our transgressions are multiplied before You, and our sins testify against us... we grope for the wall like the blind... we stumble at noonday as at twilight." This is not a prophet standing above his people, cataloguing their failures from a safe distance. It is a prophet confessing "we," and the confession reads almost like a preview of Paul's own summary centuries later: "there is none righteous, no, not one... there is none who seeks after God" (Romans 3:10–13).

And then comes one of the most striking pivots in the entire book: "the LORD saw it, and it displeased Him that there was no justice. He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor; therefore His own arm brought salvation for Him." When human righteousness proved entirely insufficient — when there was, quite literally, no one qualified to intercede — God did not lower the standard. He supplied the intercessor Himself. This is the same logic Paul would later draw out explicitly: what the law, weakened by human flesh, could never accomplish, God accomplished by sending His own Son (Romans 8:3–4). Isaiah names the problem seven centuries before the solution arrives in history, and names it with startling precision: humanity's need was never for better effort. It was for someone else entirely.

Out of that same section comes a promise that reads almost like the new covenant language of Jeremiah and Ezekiel: "My Spirit which is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth shall not depart from your mouth... from now and forever." This is

not a promise of external law imposed from outside, but of an internal, permanent, Spirit-given faithfulness — the same promise that finds its ultimate fulfillment in every believer indwelt by the Holy Spirit, secure not because of their own consistency but because of God's.

The section closes with Israel remembering — recalling the days of Moses, the exodus, the LORD who put His Holy Spirit in their midst, who redeemed them in days of old before they turned against Him. Remembering, Isaiah suggests, is where repentance always begins. When we forget whose we are, we inevitably forget who we are. The corrective is not effort but memory — recalling, deliberately and often, what God has already done, especially at the cross, where "while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). Believers who have forgotten their own redemption rarely need new information. They need to remember what they already know.

For Reflection

1. Isaiah confesses "we," including himself among the guilty, rather than standing apart from his audience. What difference does that posture make in how his warnings land?
2. "His own arm brought salvation" because there was no human intercessor. What does this tell you about the actual scope of humanity's need before God?
3. What specific act of God's past faithfulness in your own life would it help you to remember more deliberately this week?

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

A New Heaven and a New Earth

Isaiah 64–66

Isaiah's final three chapters bring the whole book to its resolution, and they do so by holding judgment and glory together in the same breath one last time, refusing, to the very end, to let either stand alone. There is an anguished cry for God to "rend the heavens and come down," an honest acknowledgment that "all our righteous acts are like filthy rags," and, alongside it, one of Scripture's most beautiful pictures of what awaits those who are found faithful: "I will create new heavens and a new earth... no longer will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days... they will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit... the wolf and the lamb will feed together." This is not merely relief from Judah's present troubles. It is the undoing of the curse itself, the restoration of the world to something even better than what was lost in Eden.

The book's very last word, though, is aimed squarely at the heart. "To this one I will look," the LORD says, "to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word." Not the one who offers the most impressive sacrifice, or observes the most meticulous ritual — Isaiah has spent this entire book exposing how little those things mean apart from a rightly ordered heart. The one God looks to is the one who comes low, and who takes His word seriously enough to be moved by it. That was Isaiah's own posture in his very first vision of the LORD, undone and confessing his ruin before ever being commissioned to speak. It is fitting that the book ends where its author began.

Isaiah's contemporary, the prophet Micah, summarized what God requires in a single memorable sentence — to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8) — and it is striking how closely that summary matches where Isaiah himself lands after sixty-six chapters. Solomon, after exhausting every other pursuit under the sun, arrived at the same conclusion: fear God, and keep His commandments (Ecclesiastes 12:13). Jesus would restate it once more, in words that gather up everything the prophets had been saying all along: "seek first His kingdom and His righteousness" (Matthew 6:33). The Christian life, for all its genuine complexity, keeps circling back to this same uncomplicated center. Trust God. Take His word seriously. Let that trust reorder everything else.

Isaiah's name means "the LORD saves." He spent sixty-six chapters, more than sixty years of ministry, and every resource of his considerable literary gift proving that his own name was true — that judgment, however severe and however deserved, was never the LORD's last intention for His people, and that a Servant was coming who would bear what they could not bear, on a highway that only the ransomed would walk, toward a city where the nations stream in peace and the wolf lies down with the lamb. That is the LORD's arm, bared before all nations for salvation. It has not stopped reaching.

For Reflection

1. Isaiah ends his massive book with a single small posture: humble, contrite, trembling at God's word. Why might that be a more fitting ending than a final grand vision?
2. How does the picture of new heavens and a new earth in chapter 65 change the way you think about present suffering and present hope?

3. Isaiah's name means "the LORD saves." Looking back over the whole book, where have you seen that truth demonstrated most clearly?

Conclusion

Isaiah began his ministry the year a good king died and no one knew what would come next. He ends it, sixty-six chapters and more than sixty years later, describing a new heaven and a new earth, a Servant who has borne the sins of many, and a highway on which only the ransomed will walk. Between those two points sits the most theologically comprehensive book in the Old Testament — a book Judah's own generation largely refused to hear, and a book the New Testament quotes more than almost any other, because it is the book in which the coming of Christ is described with the most sustained clarity anywhere outside the Gospels themselves.

We titled this volume *Judgment and Glory* because that is, quite simply, the shape of the book itself, and in a real sense the shape of the whole Bible. Thirty-nine chapters of judgment, addressed to a people whose worship had become performance and whose trust had drifted from the LORD to whatever alliance seemed most immediately useful. Twenty-seven chapters of glory, addressed to a people who would eventually experience exactly the exile Isaiah warned them of, and who needed, more than another warning, an announcement of comfort and a Servant who would finish what their own righteousness never could. Judgment first, because judgment is genuinely deserved. Glory last, because glory is what the LORD, from the very first chapter, intended all along.

If there is a single thread that ties the whole book together — Isaiah's call in chapter six, Ahaz's unbelief in chapter seven, the nations rising and falling in chapters thirteen through twenty-three, the Servant suffering in chapter fifty-three, the new heavens and new earth in chapter sixty-five — it is the question this book puts to every reader in every generation: where will you place your trust? In

alliances that will eventually fail, as Assyria failed the nations that hired it and was itself eventually hired against? In your own righteousness, which Isaiah calls, without exception, filthy rags? Or in the LORD, whose word never returns empty, whose Servant has already borne what needed to be borne, and whose promises, tested across sixty-six chapters and more than twenty-seven centuries since, have not yet failed once?

Isaiah's own name answers the question before the book even opens: the LORD saves. Not Assyria. Not Egypt. Not our own careful management of the crisis in front of us. The LORD, and the LORD alone. May we, like the prophet in his very first vision, come low enough to hear that word clearly, and like him, once cleansed, find ourselves ready to say, without hesitation, *here am I; send me*.

APPENDIX

Daily Bible Reading Plan

A one-year plan through the whole Bible, following the same daily rhythm used throughout this series.

January

1/10	Genesis 1-3	1/11	Genesis 4-7
1/12	Genesis 8-11	1/13	Genesis 12-15
1/14	Genesis 16-18	1/15	Genesis 19-21
1/16	Genesis 22-24	1/17	Genesis 25-26
1/18	Genesis 27-29	1/19	Genesis 30-31
1/20	Genesis 32-34	1/21	Genesis 35-37
1/22	Genesis 38-40	1/23	Genesis 41-42
1/24	Genesis 43-45	1/25	Genesis 46-47
1/26	Genesis 48-50	1/27	Exodus 1-3
1/28	Exodus 4-6	1/29	Exodus 7-9
1/30	Exodus 10-12	1/31	Exodus 13-15

February

2/1	Exodus 16-18	2/2	Exodus 19-21
2/3	Exodus 22-24	2/4	Exodus 25-27
2/5	Exodus 28-29	2/6	Exodus 30-32
2/7	Exodus 33-35	2/8	Exodus 36-38
2/9	Exodus 39-40	2/10	Leviticus 1-4
2/11	Leviticus 5-7	2/12	Leviticus 8-10
2/13	Leviticus 11-13	2/14	Leviticus 14-15
2/15	Leviticus 16-18	2/16	Leviticus 19-21
2/17	Leviticus 22-23	2/18	Leviticus 24-25
2/19	Leviticus 26-27	2/20	Numbers 1-2
2/21	Numbers 3-4	2/22	Numbers 5-6
2/23	Numbers 7	2/24	Numbers 8-10
2/25	Numbers 11-13	2/26	Numbers 14-15
2/27	Numbers 16-17	2/28	Numbers 18-20

March

3/1	Numbers 21-22	3/2	Numbers 23-25
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3/3	Numbers 26-27	3/4	Numbers 28-30
3/5	Numbers 31-32	3/6	Numbers 33-34
3/7	Numbers 35-36	3/8	Deuteronomy 1-2
3/9	Deuteronomy 3-4	3/10	Deuteronomy 5-7
3/11	Deuteronomy 8-10	3/12	Deuteronomy 11-13
3/13	Deuteronomy 14-16	3/14	Deuteronomy 17-20
3/15	Deuteronomy 21-23	3/16	Deuteronomy 24-27
3/17	Deuteronomy 28-29	3/18	Deuteronomy 30-31
3/19	Deuteronomy 32-34	3/20	Joshua 1-4
3/21	Joshua 5-8	3/22	Joshua 9-11
3/23	Joshua 12-15	3/24	Joshua 16-18
3/25	Joshua 19-21	3/26	Joshua 22-24
3/27	Judges 1-2	3/28	Judges 3-5
3/29	Judges 6-7	3/30	Judges 8-9
3/31	Judges 10-12		

April

4/1	Judges 13-15	4/2	Judges 16-18
4/3	Judges 19-21	4/4	Ruth 1-4
4/5	1 Samuel 1-3	4/6	1 Samuel 4-8
4/7	1 Samuel 9-12	4/8	1 Samuel 13-14
4/9	1 Samuel 15-17	4/10	1 Samuel 18-20
4/11	1 Samuel 21-24	4/12	1 Samuel 25-27
4/13	1 Samuel 28-31	4/14	2 Samuel 1-3
4/15	2 Samuel 4-7	4/16	2 Samuel 8-12
4/17	2 Samuel 13-15	4/18	2 Samuel 16-18
4/19	2 Samuel 19-21	4/20	2 Samuel 22-24
4/21	1 Kings 1-2	4/22	1 Kings 3-5
4/23	1 Kings 6-7	4/24	1 Kings 8-9
4/25	1 Kings 10-11	4/26	1 Kings 12-14
4/27	1 Kings 15-17	4/28	1 Kings 18-20
4/29	1 Kings 21-22	4/30	2 Kings 1-3

May

5/1	2 Kings 4-5	5/2	2 Kings 6-8
5/3	2 Kings 9-11	5/4	2 Kings 12-14

5/5	2 Kings 15-17	5/6	2 Kings 18-19
5/7	2 Kings 20-22	5/8	2 Kings 23-25
5/9	1 Chronicles 1-2	5/10	1 Chronicles 3-5
5/11	1 Chronicles 6	5/12	1 Chronicles 7-8
5/13	1 Chronicles 9-11	5/14	1 Chronicles 12-14
5/15	1 Chronicles 15-17	5/16	1 Chronicles 18-21
5/17	1 Chronicles 22-24	5/18	1 Chronicles 25-27
5/19	1 Chronicles 28-2 Chronicles 1	5/20	2 Chronicles 2-5
5/21	2 Chronicles 6-8	5/22	2 Chronicles 9-12
5/23	2 Chronicles 13-17	5/24	2 Chronicles 18-20
5/25	2 Chronicles 21-24	5/26	2 Chronicles 25-27
5/27	2 Chronicles 28-31	5/28	2 Chronicles 32-34
5/29	2 Chronicles 35-36	5/30	Ezra 1-3
5/31	Ezra 4-7		

June

6/1	Ezra 8-10	6/2	Nehemiah 1-3
6/3	Nehemiah 4-6	6/4	Nehemiah 7
6/5	Nehemiah 8-9	6/6	Nehemiah 10-11
6/7	Nehemiah 12-13	6/8	Esther 1-5
6/9	Esther 6-10	6/10	Job 1-4
6/11	Job 5-7	6/12	Job 8-10
6/13	Job 11-13	6/14	Job 14-16
6/15	Job 17-20	6/16	Job 21-23
6/17	Job 24-28	6/18	Job 29-31
6/19	Job 32-34	6/20	Job 35-37
6/21	Job 38-39	6/22	Job 40-42
6/23	Psalms 1-8	6/24	Psalms 9-16
6/25	Psalms 17-20	6/26	Psalms 21-25
6/27	Psalms 26-31	6/28	Psalms 32-35
6/29	Psalms 36-39	6/30	Psalms 40-45

July

7/1	Psalms 46-50	7/2	Psalms 51-57
7/3	Psalms 58-65	7/4	Psalms 66-69
7/5	Psalms 70-73	7/6	Psalms 74-77

7/7	Psalms 78-79	7/8	Psalms 80-85
7/9	Psalms 86-89	7/10	Psalms 90-95
7/11	Psalms 96-102	7/12	Psalms 103-105
7/13	Psalms 106-107	7/14	Psalms 108-114
7/15	Psalms 115-118	7/16	Psalms 119:1-88
7/17	Psalms 119:89-176	7/18	Psalms 120-132
7/19	Psalms 133-139	7/20	Psalms 140-145
7/21	Psalms 146-150	7/22	Proverbs 1-3
7/23	Proverbs 4-6	7/24	Proverbs 7-9
7/25	Proverbs 10-12	7/26	Proverbs 13-15
7/27	Proverbs 16-18	7/28	Proverbs 19-21
7/29	Proverbs 22-23	7/30	Proverbs 24-26
7/31	Proverbs 27-29		

August

8/1	Proverbs 30-31	8/2	Ecclesiastes 1-4
8/3	Ecclesiastes 5-8	8/4	Ecclesiastes 9-12
8/5	Song of Songs 1-8	8/6	Isaiah 1-4
8/7	Isaiah 5-8	8/8	Isaiah 9-12
8/9	Isaiah 13-17	8/10	Isaiah 18-22
8/11	Isaiah 23-27	8/12	Isaiah 28-30
8/13	Isaiah 31-35	8/14	Isaiah 36-41
8/15	Isaiah 42-44	8/16	Isaiah 45-48
8/17	Isaiah 49-53	8/18	Isaiah 54-58
8/19	Isaiah 59-63	8/20	Isaiah 64-66
8/21	Jeremiah 1-3	8/22	Jeremiah 4-6
8/23	Jeremiah 7-9	8/24	Jeremiah 10-13
8/25	Jeremiah 14-17	8/26	Jeremiah 18-22
8/27	Jeremiah 23-25	8/28	Jeremiah 26-29
8/29	Jeremiah 30-31	8/30	Jeremiah 32-34
8/31	Jeremiah 35-37		

September

9/1	Jeremiah 38-41	9/2	Jeremiah 42-45
9/3	Jeremiah 46-48	9/4	Jeremiah 49-50
9/5	Jeremiah 51-52	9/6	Lamentations 1:1-3:36

9/7	Lamentations 3:37-5:22	9/8	Ezekiel 1-4
9/9	Ezekiel 5-8	9/10	Ezekiel 9-12
9/11	Ezekiel 13-15	9/12	Ezekiel 16-17
9/13	Ezekiel 18-20	9/14	Ezekiel 21-22
9/15	Ezekiel 23-24	9/16	Ezekiel 25-27
9/17	Ezekiel 28-30	9/18	Ezekiel 31-33
9/19	Ezekiel 34-36	9/20	Ezekiel 37-39
9/21	Ezekiel 40-42	9/22	Ezekiel 43-45
9/23	Ezekiel 46-48	9/24	Daniel 1-3
9/25	Daniel 4-6	9/26	Daniel 7-9
9/27	Daniel 10-12	9/28	Hosea 1-7
9/29	Hosea 8-14	9/30	Joel 1-3

October

10/1	Amos 1-5	10/2	Amos 6-9
10/3	Obadiah 1, Jonah 1-4	10/4	Micah 1-7
10/5	Nahum 1-3	10/6	Habakkuk 1-3, Zephaniah 1-3
10/7	Haggai 1-2	10/8	Zechariah 1-7
10/9	Zechariah 8-14	10/10	Malachi 1-4
10/11	Matthew 1-4	10/12	Matthew 5-6
10/13	Matthew 7-8	10/14	Matthew 9-10
10/15	Matthew 11-12	10/16	Matthew 13-14
10/17	Matthew 15-17	10/18	Matthew 18-19
10/19	Matthew 20-21	10/20	Matthew 22-23
10/21	Matthew 24-25	10/22	Matthew 26
10/23	Matthew 27-28	10/24	Mark 1-3
10/25	Mark 4-5	10/26	Mark 6-7
10/27	Mark 8-9	10/28	Mark 10-11
10/29	Mark 12-13	10/30	Mark 14
10/31	Mark 15-16		

November

11/1	Luke 1	11/2	Luke 2-3
11/3	Luke 4-5	11/4	Luke 6-7
11/5	Luke 8-9	11/6	Luke 10-11
11/7	Luke 12-13	11/8	Luke 14-16

11/9	Luke 17-18	11/10	Luke 19-20
11/11	Luke 21-22	11/12	Luke 23-24
11/13	John 1-2	11/14	John 3-4
11/15	John 5-6	11/16	John 7-8
11/17	John 9-10	11/18	John 11-12
11/19	John 13-15	11/20	John 16-18
11/21	John 19-21	11/22	Acts 1-3
11/23	Acts 4-6	11/24	Acts 7-8
11/25	Acts 9-10	11/26	Acts 11-13
11/27	Acts 14-15	11/28	Acts 16-17
11/29	Acts 18-20	11/30	Acts 21-23

December

12/1	Acts 24-26	12/2	Acts 27-28
12/3	Romans 1-3	12/4	Romans 4-7
12/5	Romans 8-10	12/6	Romans 11-13
12/7	Romans 14-16	12/8	1 Corinthians 1-4
12/9	1 Corinthians 5-8	12/10	1 Corinthians 9-11
12/11	1 Corinthians 12-14	12/12	1 Corinthians 15-16
12/13	2 Corinthians 1-4	12/14	2 Corinthians 5-9
12/15	2 Corinthians 10-13	12/16	Galatians 1-3
12/17	Galatians 4-6	12/18	Ephesians 1-3
12/19	Ephesians 4-6	12/20	Philippians 1-4
12/21	Colossians 1-4	12/22	1 Thessalonians 1-5
12/23	2 Thessalonians 1-3	12/24	1 Timothy 1-6
12/25	2 Timothy 1-4	12/26	Titus 1-3, Philemon 1
12/27	Hebrews 1-6	12/28	Hebrews 7-10
12/29	Hebrews 11-13	12/30	James 1-5
12/31	1 Peter 1-5		

January

1/1	2 Peter 1-3	1/2	1 John 1-5
1/3	2 John 1, 3 John 1, Jude 1	1/4	Revelation 1-3
1/5	Revelation 4-8	1/6	Revelation 9-12
1/7	Revelation 13-16	1/8	Revelation 17-19
1/9	Revelation 20-22		

